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**CLAIMS:**

What is claimed is:

- 5    1.    A method of aggregating TCP-offloaded adapters for  
transacting data between communications systems  
comprising the steps of:  
  
aggregating the TCP-offloaded adapters by assigning a  
10    common Internet Protocol (IP) address to the TCP-  
offloaded adapters;  
  
selecting one of the aggregated TCP-offloaded adapters  
through which a connection between the communications  
15    systems is to originate;  
  
originating the connection using the selected TCP-  
offloaded adapter; and  
  
20    transacting data from the connection using the selected  
TCP-offloaded adapter.
2.    The method of Claim 1 wherein the selecting step is  
based on a local port and a remote port, the local port  
25    and the remote port being the ports through which the  
data transaction is to occur.
3.    The method of Claim 2 wherein the selecting step  
includes the step of assigning a local port through  
30    which the connection is to occur if a local port was  
not yet assigned.

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4. The method of Claim 3 wherein the assigned local port is an ephemeral port.

5. The method of Claim 1 wherein the data includes incoming and outgoing data, the incoming data being divided into data packets, each packet having associated therewith a local port and a remote port for selecting a TCP-offloaded adapter through which to travel.

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6. A computer program product on a computer readable medium for aggregating TCP-offloaded adapters for transacting data between communications systems comprising:

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code means for aggregating the TCP-offloaded adapters by assigning a common Internet Protocol (IP) address to the TCP-offloaded adapters;

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code means for selecting one of the aggregated TCP-offloaded adapters through which a connection between the communications systems is to originate;

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code means for originating the connection using the selected TCP-offloaded adapter; and

code means for transacting data from the connection using the selected TCP-offloaded adapter.

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7. The computer program product of Claim 6 wherein the selecting code means includes code means for using a local port and a remote port to select the TCP-

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offloaded, the local port and the remote port being the ports through which the data transaction is to occur.

- 5        8.    The computer program product of Claim 7 wherein the selecting code means includes code means for assigning a local port through which the connection is to occur if a local port was not yet assigned.
- 10      9.    The computer program product of Claim 8 wherein the assigned local port is an ephemeral port.
- 15      10.   The computer program product of Claim 6 wherein the data includes incoming and outgoing data, the incoming data being divided into data packets, each packet having associated therewith a local port and a remote port for selecting a TCP-offloaded adapter through which to travel.
- 20      11.   An apparatus for aggregating TCP-offloaded adapters for transacting data between communications systems comprising:  
  
         means for aggregating the TCP-offloaded adapters by assigning a common Internet Protocol (IP) address to  
25           the TCP-offloaded adapters;  
  
         means for selecting one of the aggregated TCP-offloaded adapters through which a connection between the communications systems is to originate;  
30           means for originating the connection using the selected TCP-offloaded adapter; and

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means for transacting data from the connection using the selected TCP-offloaded adapter.

5 12. The apparatus of Claim 11 wherein the selecting means includes means for using a local port and a remote port to select the TCP-offloaded, the local port and the remote port being the ports through which the data transaction is to occur.

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13. The apparatus of Claim 12 wherein the selecting means includes means for assigning a local port through which the connection is to occur if a local port was not yet assigned.

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14. The apparatus of Claim 13 wherein the assigned local port is an ephemeral port.

15. The apparatus of Claim 11 wherein the data includes incoming and outgoing data, the incoming data being divided into data packets, each packet having associated therewith a local port and a remote port for selecting a TCP-offloaded adapter through which to travel.

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16. A system for aggregating TCP-offloaded adapters for transacting data with another system comprising:

at least one storage device for storing code data; and

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at least one processor for processing the code data to aggregate the TCP-offloaded adapters by assigning a

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- common Internet Protocol (IP) address to the TCP-offloaded adapters, to select one of the aggregated TCP-offloaded adapters through which a connection between the communications systems is to originate, to  
5 originate the connection using the selected TCP-offloaded adapter, and to transact data from the connection using the selected TCP-offloaded adapter.
17. The system of Claim 16 wherein processing the code data  
10 to select one of the TCP-offloaded adapter includes processing the code data to use a local port and a remote port to select the TCP-offloaded, the local port and the remote port being the ports through which the data transaction is to occur.
- 15 18. The system of Claim 17 wherein the code data to select one of the TCP-offloaded adapter includes processing the code data to assign a local port through which the connection is to occur if a local port was not yet  
20 assigned.
19. The system of Claim 18 wherein the assigned local port is an ephemeral port.
- 25 20. The system of Claim 16 wherein the data includes incoming and outgoing data, the incoming data being divided into data packets, each packet having associated therewith a local port and a remote port for selecting a TCP-offloaded adapter through which to  
30 travel.